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ABSTRACT

This document contains four symposium papers on linking human resource development (HRD) theory and practice. "Reorienting the Theoretical Foundations of Human Resource Development: Building a Sustainable Profession and Society" (Tim Hatcher) examines the theoretical disciplines of economics, general systems, sociology, psychology, and ethics in terms of their currency to HRD and the extent that they influence societal outcomes. "Towards a Philosophical Framework for Thought and Practice" (Wendy E. A. Ruona, Susan A. Lynham) proposes a framework for HRD thought and practice that emphasizes a systems perspective of philosophy. "The Need for Theoretical Model Building in HRD" (Tom Shindell) discusses the lack of conceptual clarity and definition in the field of HRD and identifies ways theoretical model building can facilitate conceptual clarity and definition in HRD (facilitating development of a unifying definition of HRD, identifying gaps in HRD research, delineating the field's boundaries, indicating directions for future research, and enabling further dialogue and reflection in HRD). "Bridging the Gap with a Multidimensional Performance Model" (Susan Reynolds Fisher, Catherine M. Sleezer) offers a model that defines three levels of performance (capacity, process, accomplishment) at four levels of the organization (individual, group, organization, industry). (MN)

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7 **Linking HRD Theory and Practice**

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Reorienting the Theoretical Foundations of Human Resource Development: Building a Sustainable Profession and Society

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The relationship between theory and practice and societal outcomes of human resource development (HRD) had not been discussed or critiqued. The underlying theories of HRD have changed in the past three decades yet such changes have not been addressed in HRD research literature. The theoretical disciplines of economics, general systems, sociology, psychology, and ethics are examined in terms of their currency to HRD and the extent that they influence societal outcomes.

Keywords: HRD Profession, Sustainability, Social Outcomes

There is a deficiency of related literature on the relationship between theory and practice and societal outcomes of human resource development (HRD). Not since the early 1990s have the theoretical foundations of human resource development been discussed or critiqued with any constancy or depth in the research literature and no publications were located that discussed the relationship between theory and practice and outcomes of HRD. Yet, the theoretical foundations are "the intellectual underpinnings of the profession (Chalofsky, 1992, p.181), and "research efforts must continually be guided by underlying theory" (Jacobs, 1990, p.70). Kaufman (1990) proposed that outcomes must be focused not solely on short-term economic outcomes, but on adding value to society.

Problem statement and theoretical framework

The relationship between HRD theory, practice, and outcomes remains controversial and ambiguous. While the relationship of theory and practice has generated moderate discussion (Swanson & Holton, 1997), inadequate attention in related literature has been given to the relationship between theory and practice and outcomes of HRD, especially societal outcomes, i.e., beyond individual, process, and organizational outcomes.

It is axiomatic that the outcomes or results of the efforts of human resource development are ideologically intended to add value to individuals, processes, and organizations. But to what attained purpose? The results of HRD should be expected not only of individuals and organizations, but also of society. Human resource development as a profession should address both the economic bottom line that addresses short-term outputs and profits and the societal bottom line that focuses on societal value added (Kaufman, Watkins, Triner, & Smith, 1998). In addition, HRD theory and practice that is counter to societal value-added and ineffective in promoting the sustainability of society and HRD as a profession should be challenged. This conceptual analysis examines how HRD's theoretical foundations have changed and how such changes may affect the sustainability of HRD as a profession and outcomes at the societal level.

Methodology

The methodology used was a conceptual analysis based on a review of related HRD and performance improvement (PI) literature. I reviewed empirical and conceptual studies published between the early 1970's and the present. In addition, I reviewed practitioner-based literature such as texts and magazines. The review included human resource development related topics such as training and performance improvement and theoretical framework, theoretical disciplines, and other theory-related topics.

Few references were found on the theoretical foundations of HRD and no references were located on how changes in theoretical disciplines have influenced HRD. Within the HRD and PI related literature only Kaufman (1997), Kaufman, Watkins, Triner, and Smith (1998), and Hatcher (1997a; 1997b) focused on the relationship between HRD/PI and social responsibility or societal impact.

Results

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Several disciplines have been identified as contributing to the knowledge base of HRD, namely education, systems theory, economics, learning, psychology, sociology, organizational behavior, anthropology, performance improvement, and management science (Chalofsky & Lincoln, 1983; Jacobs, 1990; Weinberger, 1998).

Passmore (1996), reflecting on the earlier work of Swanson (1994), said there were three disciplinary bases suggested as the foundation of HRD: economics, general systems theory, and psychology. Ruona and Swanson (1998) recently added ethics as a mediator of HRD theoretical foundations. Jacobs (1990) concluded that although various bodies of knowledge had influenced HRD, HRD should focus on the *social* and *economic* benefits of HRD and the contributing areas should be reviewed and analyzed.

Although there seems to be general agreement that HRD is an interdisciplinary body of knowledge, there is no agreement as to what part of this body of knowledge should be considered as essential for HRD professionals (Jacobs, 1990). "Existing knowledge derived from the various contributing areas should be reviewed and analyzed to reveal gaps in knowledge and direct HRD research efforts in a more systematic manner, using theories unique to HRD as the organizing principles"(Jacobs, 1990, p.70).

The disciplines of economics, general systems, sociology, psychology, and ethics are reviewed herein. These first four disciplines are consistently identified as theoretical foundations in the HRD-related literature, and ethics is the most current addition. Each of the five disciplines is discussed in two ways. First, how the discipline has been generally interpreted; and second, a contemporary interpretation of how the discipline has evolved and changed. Additionally, each discipline is discussed in light of its influence as a theoretical foundation on the societal outcomes of HRD.

Economic Theories

Prior to and immediately after World War II economic theory was dominated by fiscal and monetary policy (Rothwell & Sredl, 1990). In the 1960s, human capital theory which regarded labor as a form of capital became a major force in economic theory. Until recently, human capital theory as a subset of capitalism served as the dominant neoclassical economic theory influencing HRD.

The current focus on the technological aspects of economics at the expense of human and social issues is exposing the downside of dominate neoclassical economic theory. The neoclassical economic paradigm is considered to be an explanation of the capitalist system and to a lesser degree the human capital school of economics and suggests that "starting from zero consumption, people will strive to consume goods and services without limit (Burk, 1994, p. 315). Orthodox economic models fall short when addressing systemic social and global environmental dilemmas. "Long-term results cannot be achieved by piling short-term results on short-term results (Drucker, 1994, p.80). Thus, there is an urgent need for more holistic, ethical value systems and sustainable economic theories and models, which influence the theory and practice of human resource development at the societal level.

Sustainability is a state where the demands placed upon society and the environment by organizations and the economy are met without reducing the capacity of the environment to produce for future generations. Traditional economics is based on the notion of economic *growth*, which is an increase in quantity that cannot be sustained indefinitely on a finite planet. Conversely, economic *development* focuses on quality of life without causing an increase in the quantity of resources consumed, and may be sustainable.

Although efforts exist to construct alternative economic paradigms, the impact of neoclassical economic theory has not changed substantially in the waning years of the twentieth century. One of the most well–known contemporary socio-economic theories is post-capitalism. In post-capitalist society knowledge is capital. The "factor of production is now neither capital nor land nor labor. It is knowledge" (Drucker, 1994, p.6). Thus, knowledge work that produces few issues around consumption or social or environmental degradation adds worth to organizations, the economy, and society.

Another contemporary paradigm is environmental economics, a "transdisciplinary" field of study that addresses the relationships between ecosystems and economic systems in the broadest sense. These relationships are central to many of humanity's current problems and to building a sustainable future but are not well covered by any existing scientific discipline. A modest example is industrial parks where resources such as energy and wastes are shared or recycled from one company to another.

More socially responsive models must replace economic theories that do not enhance a sustainable society or environment. Business, and HRD as a sub-set of business, is increasingly being viewed not only in terms of changing economics, but as a social institution with moral obligations to the ecosystem, the community, and society.

Due to an emphasis on humanity and personal and community development, contemporary economic theories such as post-capitalism and ecological economics provide HRD an opportunity to reconceptualize its role and function within organizations and as a field of study. Understanding new economic theories dedicated to building organizations dedicated to a "sense of purpose, not just more" (Stead & Stead, 1996, p.117) may result in a leadership role for HRD in interpretation and operationalization of new economic theories that enhance the HRD profession and society.

Systems Theories

Systems thinking as an HRD theoretical framework offers (a) understanding of social entities in which HRD functions, (b) enriching of the discipline of HRD, and (c) advancing the futures of organizations (Ruona & Swanson, 1998, p.21). However, recent concerns with the relationship between organizations and social and environmental degradation important to human resource development have illuminated the relevance of related and contemporary general systems theories of *autopoiesis* or self-regulating systems, *deep ecology* (Capra, 1996), and the *Gaia* hypothesis. Each contemporary systems theory is briefly discussed.

Autopoiesis, also known as self-regulating or self-producing systems, is concerned with the fact that all living systems are organized in a closed circular. Luhmann (1990) developed a concept of social autopoiesis as a process or network of communication. Since social systems are language-bound, i.e., symbolic, they are self-produced by non-physical boundaries of expectations, loyalty, confidentiality, and so on (Capra, 1996).

Deep ecology is a broad-based, holistic worldview; a way of seeing the world as an integrated whole rather than a detached collection of parts. "Deep ecological awareness recognizes the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the fact that, as individuals and societies, we are all embedded in (and ultimately dependent on) the cyclical processes of nature" (Capra, 1996, p.6).

Perhaps the most comprehensive and fascinating example of systems theory is Gaia, the notion that the planet Earth is a living system. Gaia is an ancient and organic, Mother-Earth metaphor, taken from the process of life; mechanistic thinking depends on metaphors drawn from man-made machines.

Systems theories are evolving from a mechanistic general systems theory to the organismic philosophy of Gaia. Mechanistic science rejects the idea that Gaia is alive, yet many scientists believe that morphogenesis, instinctive behavior, learning, and memory are still among the unsolved problems of biology, and the nature of life itself remains an open question. Unlike scientific systems thinking, Gaia reflects the fact that humankind's actions cannot be separated from the Earth, and like the Great Mother of ancient mythology, that Earth has a reciprocal aspect that cannot be ignored.

It is hard to ascertain the true extent of the influence of such a ubiquitous theoretical construct as general systems theory, and it is most difficult within an interdisciplinary field of study such as HRD. Since HRD efforts are carried out within organizations, the field is most influenced by theories that help us comprehend and understand human nature, organizations, and work. General systems theories also help us understand process and the interconnectedness of people, organizations, and society.

The theoretical foundations of HRD can positively influence society through our organizations only if more influential organizational members become moral agents armed with ways and means to ensure long term economic and social sustainability. Human resource development professionals contribute strategies such as systems thinking which can play a primary and pivotal role in enhancing the social performance of today's organizations (Hatcher, 1997b).

Psychological Theories

One of the most influential psychological theories applicable to HRD is behaviorism. Stimulus-response theories instruct the professional to identify and analyze stimuli within a system that may affect performance, responses that are emitted, and the consequences of those in order to uncover root causes of performance problems. Gestalt psychology also contributed to learning theory by adding the notions that patterns, relationships, and understanding of the whole are important in pattern recognition and perception.

There were also contributions of early cognitive psychologists experimenting with ways to enhance learning. Bloom's taxonomy and Gagne's conditions of learning are examples of cognitive theory linking learning to instruction. Cognitive learning theories like all learning and behavior theories have developed and evolved over the quarter century since the birth of HRD and are achieving notoriety in current HRD and PI literature.

More contemporary cognitive theories related to learning and HRD include transfer of knowledge from training to the job, motivation theories, and metacognition. Currently, the combination of social learning and cognitive psychology or social psychology has resulted in several theories such as situated learning and cognitive apprenticeships that are having an impact on learning and cognition applicable to HRD.

Unique psychological theories such as ecopsychology, the combination of psychology and ecology that focuses on the emotional bond between human beings and the natural environment out of which we evolve are beginning to emerge and influence social science disciplines. As economic theories such as environmental economics that address ecological concerns evolve, so to will psychological theories like ecopsychology.

Psychology being the study of human cognitive and affective development and processes places it squarely in the forefront of the theoretical foundations of HRD. Psychology has contributed much of what we know about how people learn and function within organizational environments. However, this central focus on the individual has drawn criticism. Psychology as an HRD discipline is myopic in failing to address individuals within contexts such as groups, organizations, and societies. Its relevance to HRD societal outcomes has been markedly limited. Changes in psychological theories will challenge HRD researchers to use alternative psychological assumptions as theoretical frameworks, and to reconceptualize the impact that psychology has on HRD outcomes at the societal level.

Sociological Theories

Like psychology, much of HRD practice and research is based upon various and divergent sociological theories. "Much of what is known about organizational culture and socialization...stems from sociological theory" (Rothwell & Sredl, 1992, p.60). Several existing and emerging sociological theories that may influence HRD are discussed.

The sociological theory of functionalism may be defined as the analysis of social and cultural phenomena in terms of the functions they perform in a social and cultural system. A concept of functionalism that influences HRD is the functional-dysfunctional continuum. Generally, when a subsystem supports the system it is functional. When a subsystem hinders the overall operation of a system, it is considered dysfunctional. This is important to HRD because it helps explain efficiency and effectiveness of subsystems to the larger system.

The major alternative to functionalism is conflict theory. Where functionalists see interdependence and unity in society, conflict theorists see an arena in which groups fight for power, and the control of conflict simply means that one group suppresses its rivals. Here power is the core of social relationships. In most modern organizations and especially bureaucracies and those that are hierarchical, conflict theory is most useful in explaining relationships.

Unlike functionalism and conflict theories that focus on systems, organizations, and society, symbolic interactionism focuses on the interaction of an individual's internal thoughts and emotions and external social behavior. Here, individuals construct their own conduct through symbols that guide their decision making and forming of opinions. Unlike functionalists, who see people as passive agents, symbolic interationists view individuals as self-interacting and not dependent on social, cultural, or psychological variables to determine action. Symbolic interactionism is a framework for qualitative methodologies used in much of HRD research.

Compared to other sociological theories, phenomenology is more recent and somewhat more difficult to define and describe. In phenomenology, the individual avoids all prior assumptions, biases, and dogmas and thus examines phenomena immediately as they occur. It challenges culturally learned ideas and implies that reality is socially constructed. Types of phenomenological sociology include ethnomethodology, social construction of reality theory, and feminist standpoint theory.

Additional alternative and contemporary sociological theories that may be influencing HRD include postmodernism, environmental sociology and sociobiology, and feminism. Each theory is briefly discussed.

Postmodernism is an analysis of modern society that focuses on the power of mass media in shaping social relationships and those popular culture influences our consumption. An important implication of postmodernism is that the value and utility of images and symbols is no longer regarded. As a result, "qualities like artistic merit, integrity, seriousness, authenticity, realism, intellectual depth and strong narratives tend to be undermined" (Strinati, 1995, p.225).

Among the most recent of the theories discussed, environmental sociology and sociobiology are interdisciplinary theories that combine sociological theory with either biology or environmentalism and examine the relationship between culture and nature. Environmental sociology may indirectly impact HRD by increasing our awareness of the dominion that corporations have over the environment. Sociobiology, or sociology of the body, is concerned with humans as a biological species within a culture; that how we perceive our bodies, how others perceive them, and how they perform is a function of society. Feminism, the study of how women are represented in

culture, is playing a dominant role in the sociology of the body. Feminism also addresses gender power issues and cultural and media representation of women. Especially in the West in the past two decades, feminism has played an important role in corporate culture.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact influence that any particular sociological theory has had on HRD. One conclusion is "it depends" on the organization, the corporate culture, and the societal culture. Since HRD is concerned with how people interact within organizational environments, it is axiomatic that sociological theories are fundamental to the theoretical foundations of HRD. Which theories are most influential is a matter of context. As HRD becomes more global and multiple cultures are considered, sociological theories such as symbolic interactionism, feminism, and eco-sociology will become more valid and will nurture new theories, research designs, and practices.

Ethics

Ethics is the newest addition to the theoretical foundations of HRD. Ruona & Swanson (1998) said that ethics and integrity of those ethics, are vital issues for the field of HRD (p.25). Rothwell and Sredl (1992, p.190) added that HRD professionals should be more keenly aware of ethical and value issues than most people. Dean (1997) concluded that we should consider ethics in our research and be included in our research agenda because "virtually no investigation can remove itself from the concern of ethics" (p.4).

Unlike the other four HRD disciplines, ethics as a body of knowledge has remained relatively stable over time. What has changed is the application of various theories, interpretation, and significance in business and industry especially within the last half of the twentieth century. Thus, the primary focus of this discussion is on use of varied ethics theories and the application or practice of ethics within an HRD or business context.

There are many and varied theories of ethics applicable in a business context. Take for example, *utilitarianism*, a philosophy based on the premise that no action is inherently good or bad, but only with regard to its consequences; and *deontology*, the study of moral obligations to universal principles.

Utilitarian thought suggests that people should promote the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number and identifies moral actions as right in proportion as they promote happiness, and wrong as they produce pain and deprivation of pleasure. Deontology denounces that consequences dictate morality. As a deontologist, Kant maintained that people act according to moral rules or "categorical imperatives" which they would suggest everyone follow.

Successful organizations tend to subscribe to the Kantian ethical theory (Tuleja, 1985). Theories of ethics relevant to HRD depend upon appliation and substantiation in a business context.

Ethics are principles of right or wrong that motivate personal behavior and support or refute the correctness of such behavior. Ethics are interpreted through the interaction between the multiple contexts of individual ethics (based on morality, ideology, values, and experience), and the ethical climates of the organization, business, and society (Carroll, 1989). Interpretation of ethics is problematic within a global business context containing multiple societies.

The practice of ethics help us resolve ethical conflicts and manage ethical problems that are important in international contexts. HRD can help create and maintain an ethical climate within an organization which allows for individual ethical diversity yet promotes organizational and societal goal attainment. Structural issues such as establishing a code of ethics, reducing inducements for misdeeds, and raising the risk of exposure are operationalized in HRD programs.

Ethics is fundamental to the creation of organizational outcomes that result in social and moral responsibilities beyond that of creation of wealth. Thus, ethics as one of the theoretical foundations of HRD provides the vehicle for these outcomes to occur. However, the economic environment in which organizations flourish or decline, e.g., free enterprise, profit-oriented, and consumer-driven is exerting tremendous pressure to increase productivity and profit. Simultaneously, organizational impact on the environment, the community, and society is continually challenged and scrutinized. This dilemma is causing stress between organizations and society. Without a reliable vehicle with which to address the issues of social responsibility and responsiveness, organizations may abdicate to financial pressures, thus losing forever the opportunity to create a sustainable future.

In addition to organizational ethical issues, the ethics of HRD as a profession plays an important role in developing ethical behaviors in organizations and groups within a community. As HRD matures, codes of ethics and mores of acceptable behaviors will emerge and influence the growth of acceptable and unacceptable organizational ethics that impact individuals, organizations, and society.

Discussion

Organizations significantly and continually influence humanity and acquire dominance over social and eco-systems. Human resource development as an organizational function plays a principle role in enhancing the long-term sustainability of organizations and has the potential to help cultivate organizations that positively influence individuals, communities, society, and the environment. The theoretical foundations of a discipline dedicated to enhancing human development within organizations dictates its validity and, in many ways, its success as a field of study.

As an integral part of today's organizations, human resource development has an economic responsibility to the organizations who employ its professionals and methods and the HRD profession has a moral responsibility to individuals trained and educated and otherwise influenced. But, as discussed herein, HRD also has a responsibility to recreate itself through self-assessment to create a field of study that is responsible beyond out-dated social and psychological theories and traditional economics.

Shortsighted economic theory and obsolete theories of systems and morality are faithful to short-term returns and disjoined approaches to sustained change. Such theories hamper socially responsive organizational and positive societal changes and limit the sustainability of professions.

Shifts in theoretical paradigms are catalysts for progress toward sustainable development of the environment and humanity. It is incumbent upon applied disciplines, especially a discipline such as HRD in search of its own identity (Watkins, 1990), to systematically review its theoretical underpinnings to ensure their validity and worth. Such an undertaking identifies flawed theories and highlights more valuable and cogent theories.

Human resource development professionals and academics who respond to the challenge of updating and evolving the theoretical foundations of HRD will help to advance its theoretical rigor while correcting for the invalid influences of archaic disciplines.

Contribution to new knowledge in HRD

Although human resource development (HRD) as a field of study has been analyzed from its theoretical perspectives to a degree, there has been no distinct attempt to analyze and modernize the various disciplines that make up its theoretical foundations. HRD as a profession and a field of study must know how its theoretical foundations have changed and to what extent such changes may have affected it in order for HRD to remain a viable and rigorous field of study. This review of theoretical foundations of HRD serves as a catalyst, a "jumping-off" point for further investigation into the theoretical foundations of HRD with a focus on outcomes at the societal level.

The implications of this conceptual analysis are twofold. First, a more comprehensive study of alternative disciplines might shed light on more applicable and valid disciplines than HRD currently addresses. Second, since shifting theoretical paradigms influence HRD research and practice a review of how or to what extent research and practice have changed as a result should be completed.

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Towards a Philosophical Framework for Thought and Practice

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Philosophy is often thought of as an abstract discipline with little practical utility. The goal of this paper is to revive philosophy as an important activity with much relevance in HRD. A framework which emphasizes a systems perspective of philosophy is proposed and each component is briefly described. Then, the practical contributions of philosophy are demonstrated by examining three current issues facing HRD.

Keywords: Philosophy, Thought and practice, Systems Perspective

Although often thought of as a discipline of abstract thought with little practical utility, philosophy can play a very useful and purposeful role in HRD. Before progressing further, think about the following scenarios:

> A CEO at ACME company calls in the company HRD professional and announces that ACME has got to be more proactive on issues of diversity. He requests that the HRD professional immediately begin to implement interventions that will address this problem. The HRD person accepts the assignment and begins his work. In the next six months, he creates policies and procedures on diversity and sensitivity, works with HR to set quotas for recruitment and hiring and implement new HR policies, and mandates sensitivity training for all management.
>
> At XYZ, Inc. across town, a CEO calls in the company HRD professional with much the same request. This person, however, requests sessions with the key leaders of the business to come to a better understanding of what diversity means to this company and clarify their business and moral motivations for pursuing interventions related to diversity. Six months later, the company has begun an set of coordinated interventions related to building and maximizing community at the company. The focus is on valuing diverse contributions and eliminating barriers that hinder individuals in achieving their goals. There were very few new policies set, no quotas mandated, and the training and OD efforts emphases integration and optimization of diversity.

These HRD professionals both faced the same presenting problem. They were charged with confronting diversity practices at the companies in which they worked. However, the resulting interventions differed greatly. Why is this? Some analysts might conclude that the differences had to do with competence of the HRD professional, differing company cultures, or the desires of top leadership. However, if we look beyond these things we might have discovered that the real differences were much deeper. Each of these two HRD professionals brought fundamentally different philosophies to their work. If we had been able to interview them, we might have discovered that the HRD person at ACME and the person at the XYZ, Inc. differed greatly in some of their basic assumptions about diversity. Table 1 outlines a few possible ones we might have found.

The beliefs that each HRD professional brought to their work fundamentally impacted the shape and qualities of the interventions that followed. These beliefs affected how they were able to think about and evaluate issues related to diversity, how they assessed needs in the organization, and their actions in the organization. Moreover, if an HRD researcher had been investigating these interventions, the way in which these they were studied would have been influenced and the findings would have also been quite different between the companies.

Now, this example may feel a bit exaggerated to you, however this is what goes on everyday. How one views the world impacts all else that flows from that view. This is certainly not "new" news. Senge (1990) alerted us to the "iceberg nature" of deep structural issues and how these change the shape of what is seen and done. In this sense too, assumptions and beliefs about the world and knowledge change the nature of what we see, know, and do in HRD. Yet, many past conversations in HRD have been largely about what would be the metaphorical "top" of the iceberg. Until we look beneath the action of practice and research, we will be unable to tend to fundamental issues and challenges facing our field.

Table 1

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Example Beliefs of Two HRD Professionals.

Beliefs/Assumptions	HRD Professional at ACME	HRD Professional at XYZ, Inc.
What is Diversity?	• A problem to be solved and managed. • Not an enhancer of business performance.	• An opportunity to reflect on community and create in new ways. • An issue of human differences inherent in business, that enhances a business's competitive position.
Differences	• Should be minimized so people can work together better and easier.	• Should be maximized for optimal performance.
Conformity	• Conformity to a "majority" view is good .	• There are multiple worldviews and ways of doing things and these should be fostered.

Purpose of this Paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide a focus for new conversations—to re-stimulate discussion of philosophy underlying HRD theory and practice. A framework which emphasizes a systems perspective of philosophy is proposed and each component is briefly described. Next, the importance of philosophy is discussed at two levels. First, generically in terms of what philosophy, as an activity, offers. Then, more specifically, as a framework to elucidate how current issues facing and being dealt with in HRD, both practical and theoretical, fit into a broader philosophical context.

What is Philosophy?

The word "philosophy" is a word of Greek derivation meaning "the love of wisdom" (Cavalier, 1996, p. 2). A traditional view of philosophy is that it is the field of ideas and thinking about life and everything in it. This seems a bit lofty for many who must cope with practical problems on a daily basis. However, philosophy is generally concerned with three basic issues: being (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and acting (axiology). Through these foci philosophers are interested in answering the following three questions: (1) What is real? (a question of ontology), (2) What is true? (a question of epistemology), and (3) What is good? (a question of axiology).

If one thinks about these foci as separate areas of inquiry, then philosophy does not seem to serve much purpose. However, in actuality, these three areas all work together to make philosophy what it is. In this sense, from a systems perspective, the whole is more than the sum of its parts. A revival of philosophy as a highly practical activity hinges on our capacity to view it as a set of interacting components which, when viewed as a whole, have properties that do not exist within any of the smaller units (Heylighten & Joslyn, 1992). Systems theory, which has been advocated as a foundational discipline by many in HRD (Ruona, 1998; Swanson, 1998; Willis, 1997; Gradous, 1989), reminds us to view the multiple tiers and relationships that exist between these components of philosophy.

A System of Interacting Components of Thought and Practice

To get a sense of the potential utility of philosophy one needs to consider philosophy as a system of thought and action (Bohm, 1994). That is, as an activity or process of inquiry that is concerned with disciplined reflection, ways of thinking about certain questions, interpreting texts, trying out ideas and thinking of possible arguments for and against them, and wondering about how concepts really work.

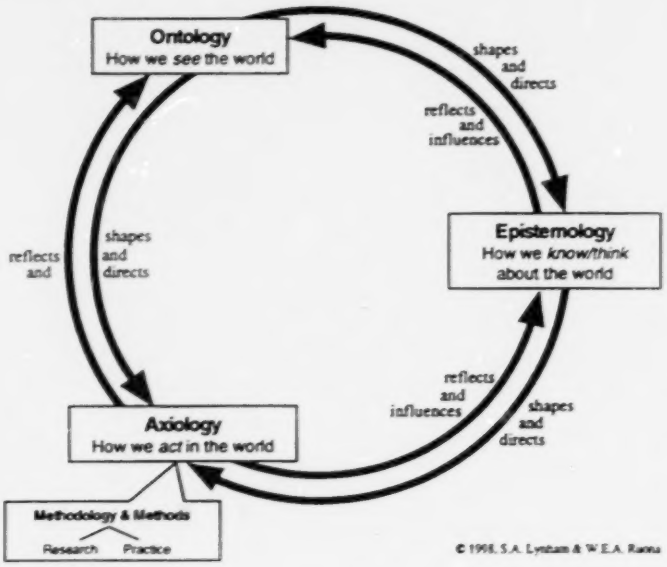
We therefore see the critical components of a philosophical framework for HRD as consisting of three key components.

1. Ontology: the component that makes a view of the nature of the world and nature of phenomena of interest to HRD explicit (how we *see* the world);
2. Epistemology: the component that makes the nature of knowledge in HRD, and the necessary and sufficient requirements to hold and claim knowledge in our field explicit (how we *know/think* about the world);

3. Axiology: the component that makes explicit how we ought to act, individually as well as communally in our field. It outlines espoused aims, ideals and proper methodologies and methods for HRD inquiry and practice (how we should *act* in research and practice).

These three components interact in a dynamic and systemic way, together forming a guiding framework for a congruent and coherent system of thought and practice in HRD. Figure 1 shows the interactive and dynamic relationship among the key components integral to a sound philosophical framework for research and practice in HRD. It elucidates the connections—demonstrating that how we *see* the world determines how we *think* about the world, how we *think* about the world determines how we *act* in the world, and how we *act* in the world, in turn, reflects how we *think* about and see the world. And, that each of these components reflects and influences the other.

Figure 1. A Philosophical Framework for Thought and Practice.



Philosophies can be individually held. More commonly, however, philosophies are shared. History is characterized by phases where different prominent philosophies influenced current conditions, actions, and events. In education, for example, the philosophical schools of thought forwarded by Dewey and Snedden are consistently contrasted and analyzed for their varied impacts on schools in America. In business, Taylor's scientific management philosophy is being replaced by more organic views of how organizations function and disciplines like HRD are helping organizations cope with the far-reaching implications of this change. It is our presupposition that HRD must begin to identify its own philosophy as a community of professionals engaged in "improving individual and organizational performance through learning" (AHRD, 1998). The next section briefly overviews each component of philosophy to offer a common basis of understanding and discusses the utility of each component in HRD.

Core Components of Philosophy

What is Ontology?

Definition Ontology is concerned with fundamental assumptions about the nature of phenomena (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). It focuses on basic questions and assumptions about the nature of reality—questions like: What is real? What is "there" and what do we mean by "there"? What is the world made of? Is reality ordered in any way? Is reality "out there" or "inside us", or a combination of both? What are humans? Kuhn (1970) also introduced another way of thinking about ontology in his notion of a paradigm. A paradigm is a worldview, or a way of thinking that reflects fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the nature of phenomena. An ontology, ulimately, is how one sees and views the world and reality.

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Utility Mapping the ontology of a field involves making explicit the common understandings, beliefs and assumptions of how those in the field see the world, of how they perceive the essences of reality and phenomena that constitute the field's concern and focus. It is about identifying and articulating the core assumptions about reality that drive the thought and practice of a field.

What is Epistemology?

Definition Gioia & Pitre (1990) describe epistemology as "fundamental assumptions about the nature of knowledge about phenomena" (p. 585). Epistemology (also described as theory of knowledge) is the component of philosophy that raises questions about the nature of knowledge and reasonable belief. In so doing, it addresses the following kinds of questions: What is knowledge? How does knowledge differ from mere opinion or belief? How is knowledge acquired? When is a belief justified or reasonable?

Central to epistemology is the Socratic, tripartite equation of knowledge which states that *knowledge = true, justified belief* (Pojman, 1995). Epistemology is therefore concerned with not only the nature of knowledge, but also examines the necessary and sufficient conditions required for these components of knowledge (Root, 1997). Epistemology is about how we know and think about the world.

Utility Examining the epistemology of HRD involves articulating the common assumptions, thoughts and understanding of what makes for knowledge of and about phenomena in HRD. It also denotes the necessary and sufficient standards for knowledge in HRD. It therefore serves a purpose of both clarification of the nature of knowledge and standards for "good" knowledge in a field.

What is Axiology?

Definition Axiology (sometimes referred to as ethics), a third component of philosophy, is concerned with action. It is normative, speaking to issues of ethics, what is good, and what ought to be done. In other words, it indicates how one should *act* in inquiry and practice, and the extent to which this action should be congruent with ontological and epistemological aims and ideals.

Utility Axiology urges congruence between the ontological and epistemological assumptions and the espoused actions of a field. Thus, axiology plays an important role in putting the standards and requirements of acceptable methodology and methods for research and practice in HRD in place. Making the axiology explicit helps to set and clarify the guiding tone and rigor for action in HRD. It helps to define desired standards for methodology and methods in both research and practice.

What is Methodology and Methods?

Definition The concept of axiology is broad and includes quite a few things. There seems to be some ambiguity in philosophy about what comprises axiology. However, two important elements of axiology would seem to be methodology and methods. Methodology is defined as the system that influences the way things are done—how we choose and use methods, and conceptualize, analyze, collect, and design. Methods are means and manners of procedure.

Due to the applied nature of HRD, methodologies and methods need to be considered in the context of both research and practice. Methodologies in research inform us of ways of studying phenomena (Gioia & Pitre, 1990) while methodologies in practice inform us of ways of carrying-out interventions in HRD. Methods in each domain expand the methodologies by offering tools, techniques, and procedures. See Figure 2 for some examples of how methodologies and methods are connected.

Utility Specifying methodology and methods for conducting research and practice enable us to "rigorize" research and practice in HRD. This rigor demands that we judge research and practice against desired standards that are inherent in axiology. Given the rising concern about increasing atheoretical practice (Swanson & Holton, 1997) and unuseful theory in HRD, a framework and criteria for judging the utility of research and theory and the soundness of practice would seem to be both welcome and useful.

Figure 2
Two Important Elements of Axiology.

	Methodology	Methods
Research	*Positivistic*	• Experimental • Quasi-experimental • Survey
	Interpretive	• Phenomenology • Case Study • Etc....
	Critical Science	• Critical Theory • Feminist Theory • Etc...
	Methodology	**Methods**
Practice	Training and Development	• ADDIE • Performance-Learning-Satisfaction Evaluation • Etc...
	Organizational Development	• Action Research • Intervention models/processes • Etc...

Why is Philosophy Important?

Philosophy helps develop capacities for thinking (Honderich, 1995). At the heart of it, philosophy is a systematic examination of the assumptions that underlie action. Theories-in-use are investigated and analyzed to surface the essences of thoughts and ideas that, ultimately, drive actions. Magee (1971) tells us that "one of the tasks of philosophy is mapping the logic of...discourse, laying it out, so to speak, so that a person can make his way about it successfully" (p. 45).

In fulfilling this role, it affords practice in criticism. Examples of this include building counter arguments to common wisdoms (Root, 1993) and developing examples for questionable generalizations. It also develops responsiveness to concrete cases and an appreciation of the thinking expressed in these. Finally, it enables interpretation and theorizing, for example, by relating positions of one area of inquiry to those in another.

Philosophy thus provides us with 1) practical ways of thinking about certain sorts of questions (questions of the nature of reality, truth and ethics) and 2) the use of logical argument, disciplined reflection, and theoretical reasoning in this questioning process. It helps us develop skills to critically think about things concerning the nature of the world, justification of beliefs, and the conduct of life. Philosophy engages us in the interpretation of texts and the criticisms of common wisdoms that are often taken for granted.

Implications for HRD

There is certainly utility in each of the components described above. In addition, philosophy offers a context in which to view current issues being dealt with in HRD. Three areas that philosophy can impact are discussed here: 1) practice, 2) research and theory building, and 3) the evolution of HRD.

Implications for Practice

Reflection about philosophy (ontology, epistemology, axiolgy) ensures that as practitioners we are leading, in Plato's words, an "examined life", acknowledging that beliefs about basic ends and principles lead to concrete conclusions and action. This process can be done unconsciously where it is subject to many hazards. Or, it can be done consciously where one (or an entire field) strives for clarification and alignment. This is not to say that this clarification process is ever finished—it is a continual process where "new light is always dawning on meaning of concepts at every level, with the consequence that the whole enterprise has to be forever examined" (Magee, 1971, p. 47). However, striving for the identification of key beliefs and assumptions about each of the three components and, then, being grounded in those articulated by the discipline of HRD will undoubtedly result in better and more

consistent practice. This is especially relevant in HRD, an applied field driven by its practice, where theory sometime lags behind the challenges being faced in organizations. Philosophy provides some structure on which to make decisions when research is not there to support a practice or policy. Magee (1971) identifies the importance of philosophy to complement science when he explains:

> Conclusions about what to do are a mixture of judgements about the "excellencies to be produced" combined with empirical or scientific knowledge about how to produce them. It is important to notice that we cannot derive the list of prescriptions, excellencies, that are a set of value judgements about what to do, from the descriptive, empirical, knowledge accounts of what the facts usually are. It is, in short, not possible to go directly from scientific understanding to policy and practice. Practice is always a combination of prescriptive convictions and descriptive understanding. (p. 46)

The logic of philosophy allows us to engage in thinking that is at once disciplined and imaginatively creative. We are able to apply philosophical methods to practical problems and ascertain what the issues are and how different assumptions affect the problem. In addition, we can use philosophy to analyze and interpret practice. In these ways the idealism of philosophy can be used to improve how we address practical problems. The act of philosophy cultivates the capacity and appetite for reflection, for exchange and debate of ideas, for life-long learning, and for dealing with problems for which there are no easy answers.

Implications for Research and Theory Building

HRD has recently turned its attention to an important phase of its own development. There is increasing effort being invested in the areas of theory-building and research. Critical work is being done to encourage and refine research methods and paradigms (Swanson & Holton, 1997; Marsick, 1990) and to call attention to the importance of building theory in HRD (Mott, 1998; Hansen, 1998; Torraco, 1997; Chalofsky, 1996). The motivation driving these efforts is to undergird HRD with a solid, systematically-acquired knowledge base.

Another important part of the evolutionary process is to acknowledge the philosophical framework in which these discussions are taking place. A worthy debate on paradigms for research and theory-building between Marsick and Passmore in 1990 hinted at connections of research with epistemological concerns and even with notions of worldview (ontology), but these connections are rarely made. Many discussions of research and theory-building are happening in a vacuum concerned with only science and methods, or the "how to" of generating new knowledge. For the most part, scholars have agreed that there are two primary ways of doing research (quantitatively and qualitatively) and have urged people in the field to get on with the business of researching.

While this is practical and necessary, there is certainly merit in also placing knowledge-generation in a philosophical framework—put in it's place, as it were, and strive to understand how it is connected with how we see, think about, and act in the world. Research and theory-building are only parts of an overall context that drives HRD. How we see the world and what we recognize as knowledge in HRD fundamentally affects the methodologies we employ to research and build theory. A too limited view of ontology and epistemology can limit the scope and utility of HRD. A too broad view can lead to the slippery slope of relativism where there are few standards. Philosophy ultimately requires us to consider what knowledge and theory really are. When placed within a context of assumptions about reality and nature our current views of these things may or may not change. Marsick (1990) states:

> ...if we are to describe accurately and explain the world we research, then, as we work we must test our assumptions about what we view as knowledge, whether our view is compatible with the nature of organizations and the phenomena we are researching, and how we believe we should go about researching these phenomena. (p. 33)

It is important to acknowledge how science and philosophy complement one another and proceed on a journey that demands work in both areas from HRD scholars. Philosophy is not more or less important than science, it is just different. While science tells us what the world contains, philosophy asks about different ways to classify these things. While science produces knowledge, philosophy asks what we can know and how. While science provides new knowledge of the observable or based on experimental tests, philosophy suggests "rules" for the stuff of reality and how it is organized. Philosophy looks behind science and analyzes concepts/notions and methods that are used. It pushes a discipline such as HRD to strive for even more than good research. In this way, philosophy

may suggest important standards of rigor for research and theory building that have yet to be considered.

Implications for the Evolution of HRD

Philosophy also plays an important role in the future of HRD. HRD continues to deal with perennial issues that threaten its stability and future effectiveness. Recently, Warren Topp (1998) introduced these authors to the concept of a "conversation having us"—that is, of a conversation which is going-on and becomes the prominent focus such that little else actually happens except the having of the conversation. Very few new thoughts are generated, positions are defended, tradition weighs heavy, and very little progress is made in understanding and creating new meaning. Some would say that HRD is currently engaged in a few of these kinds of conversations.

One such issue is the purpose of HRD which has been heavily discussed during the last five years. Philosophy can provide a framework for articulating the purpose of the field and moving past the conversation having us. Instead, we need to have the conversations—and the only way this will happen is if we really begin to explore the deep assumptions that drive our field. It is at this level that generative conversations take place and real change begins (Topp, 1998; Bohm, 1994). Surfacing and clarifying key assumptions about ontology, in particular, provides a set of criteria to guide future discussions of what is and isn't HRD. We can analyze different schools of thought emerging in HRD (i.e. performance and learning) to see where they come together and where they do not. Philosophy can be a rigorous backdrop for judging whether and to what extent the field can accommodate multiple definitions and purposes. This same set of criteria can also be used to balance the long- and short-term interests of HRD—helping us to do both for the optimization of the field. Philosophy can be an important mechanism to guide the nature of conversations that need to continually be held in HRD. This will ensure that HRD grows well.

Another issue that is increasingly being discussed is that of professionalization in HRD. The focus of a 1998 AHRD symposium, the issue is multi-faceted and controversial. One of the emerging dilemmas is what any kind of credentialing or certification would be based on. Reflection, theory-building (Mott, 1998; Hansen, 1998), research, and competencies have been suggested as possible bases, while others have suggested bases that are more philosophically grounded. Ellinger (1998) and Watkins (1990) have both advocated an integrated vision and values. Chalofsky (1996) suggested that the discipline's core must include philosophy and mission, theory and concepts, and roles and competencies. It is presently unclear where this conversation will lead and how it will impact the future of the field. However, it is clear that philosophy and the above-proposed framework for thought and practice in HRD will factor into it.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to provide a focus for new conversations—to re-stimulate discussion of philosophy underlying HRD theory and practice. It offered a framework in which to think of philosophy more systemically and demonstrated the potential impact that philosophy can have in HRD. In closing, we are reminded that during the first century of science, many great scientists considered themselves to be revivers or rediscovers of knowledge. We now invite you to join their ranks and revive philosophy as an important context in which to couch paradigmatic and methodological progress in HRD.

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The Need for Theoretical Model Building in HRD

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The problem addressed in this paper is the lack of conceptual clarity and definition in the field of HRD. Through literature review and analysis, four significant related issues are presented, and five ways theoretical model building can facilitate conceptual clarity and definition in HRD are identified.

Keywords: HRD, Theory, Model

For a field growing, expanding, and trying to define itself (Jacobs, 1990; Marsick, 1990, 1990a; Watkins, 1990; and Chalofsky, 1992), Human Resource Development (HRD) has surprisingly few "HRD" theories and models specific to the field. Four significant issues related to this observation are: 1) the very diverse philosophical - methodological - practical stances taken towards what is appropriate for HRD research, 2) no clear, widely accepted definition of this evolving field, 3) the lack of "HRD specific" research, and 4) the lack of theoretical model building evident in the literature. The problem of this study is the lack of conceptual clarity and definition in HRD, and the research question is, "How can theoretical model building facilitate conceptual clarity and definition in HRD?"

The Philosophical and Methodological Issue

Marsick (1990, 1990a) and Passmore (1990) articulate some of the conflicts currently faced by researchers as they attempt to create research and build the field of HRD from various philosophical, methodological, and practical perspectives. Some of the academic and practical tensions existing between various rational, empirical, positivistic stances toward what is acceptable, needed, and meaningful research for the field of HRD versus various contextual, rigorous, post-positivistic stances towards what is acceptable, needed, and meaningful are indicated. The question is not do researchers and practitioners build and develop the field of HRD relying only on knowledge derived from various postivisticly oriented experiments, surveys, etc., or various post-positivisticly oriented case studies, phenomenological observations, etc., or both. Rather, as Marsick and Passmore agree, research and theory building are desperately needed, regardless of the philosophy and methodology employed. Dubin's (1978) position is that a theory/model developed from any philosophical perspective and employing any appropriate methodology is acceptable.

Moreover, Dubin (1978) asserts that it is not philosophical perspective or methodology employed, but "consesus" that determines a theory/model's acceptability. Consensus is the key, and he indicates that there are three different ways in which consensus can be reached: 1) the agreement of experts, 2) the logic utilized in the development of the theory/model, and/or 3) the proof provided by empirical testing of the theory/model.

The Lack of a Unifying Definition Issue

Chalofsky (1992) states, "One of the more debated issues in the field has been the need for a unifying definition that would not only provide a focus for the development of the profession but would also set limits on the boundaries of the field." He points out that there are many definitions of the field of HRD, and presents seven of them:

> *Nadler's* from 1990, "Organized learning experiences in a given period of time to bring about the possibility of performance change."
>
> *Chalofsky and Lincoln's* from 1983 which offers specific definitions of HRD from five perspectives: philosophical, operational, functional, field of practice, and field of study.
>
> *McLagan's* 1989 which was sponsored by the American Society for Training and Development, "HRD is the integrated use of training and development, career development, and organization development to improve individual and organizational effectiveness."

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Gilley and Eggland's from 1989, "Organized learning activities arranged within an organization in order to improve performance and/or personal growth for the purpose of improving the job, the individual and/or the organization."

Smith presents two definitions from 1990, "The process of determining the optimum methods of developing and improving the human resources of an organization and the systematic improvement of the performance and productivity of employees through training, education, and development, and leadership, for the mutual attainment of organizational and personal goals."

Watkins' from 1989, "The field of study and practice responsible for the fostering of a long-term, work-related learning capacity at the individual, group, and organizational level of organizations."

Chalofsky (1992) proposes a unifying definition after finding the common denominators of these seven definitions, "Human resource development is the study and practice of increasing the learning capacity of individuals, groups, collectives, and organizations through the development and application of learning-based interventions for the purpose of optimizing human and organizational growth and effectiveness."

The Lack of HRD Specific Research Issue

HRD borrows, applies, absorbs, and transforms knowledge, theories, and models from many other disciplines (Jacobs, 1990). But, for a field to delineate itself successfully, it needs some theories and models to "call its own." The field does have the *ASTD Models of Practice* and other theory/models of parts of the field (career development, organization development, training evaluation, etc.), all of which could contribute more to the clarification and definition of the field if they were tested in HRD specific research.

The Lack of Theoretical Model Building Issue

A preliminary review was conducted of the articles published in *Human Resource Development Quarterly* to examine these that discussed the need for theory/model building and the state of clarification and definition in the field of HRD. Jacobs (1990) makes several points about the need for theory/model building: 1) "focused theory development and research are important means of evaluating the relative status of an area of professional practice," 2) "the need arises to formalize the knowledge gained in practice into some logical structure," 3) "theory development and research are essential activities...keeping in mind that relevance to practice remains the ultimate criterion for the worth and value of theory," 4) "HRD research efforts must continually be guided by an underlying theory" and 5) "Theoretical knowledge about HRD must logically grow in an incremental fashion." He then cites the need for the generation of new propositions. Marsick (1990, 1990a), Passmore (1990), and Watkins (1990) all concur about the need for clarity and definition in the field achievable in part by integrating theory/models.

An exploratory study was conducted to determine the extent to which theoretical model building was evident in the literature. This study identified 614 dissertations that fit the key words "theoretical model building" listed in the *Dissertation Abstracts International* database covering the past 18 years. On review, the majority of the dissertations were found to be theory/models in such areas as computers, pnysical sciences (such as thermodynamics, hydrology, architecture, etc.), economics and political theory. Those even remotely related to HRD, training, management, and education numbered 37 or only 6% of the dissertations.

A more detailed analysis of the 37 dissertations was completed to determine both which were HRD specific, and which were not HRD specific but were related to the field. These dissertations were further analyzed to determine which developed a theory/model (using various methodologies/approaches), which refined a previously proposed theory/model (using various methodologies/approaches), which tested a theory/model (using various methodologies/approaches), and which utilized Dubin's methodology for theory/model building. This analysis yielded the results indicated in Table 1.

Most studies developed a theory/model but unfortunately, research was focused primarily on proposition rather than testing (only half of the theory-research cycle). Even those dissertations which were not clearly HRD but related to the field were theory/model development only. Another content analysis study was conducted to analyze the types of dissertations completed in a higher education administration department at one university (Sharpe,

1993) had as its first recommendation, "Dissertation research in the department should become more based on theory and contribute to building theory."

Table 1 – Theoretical Model Building Dissertations

37 (6%) Dissertations HRD or HRD Related Out of 614 Dissertations Matching Key Words "Theoretical Model Building" (100%)

27 HRD Dissertations (73% of the 37 Dissertations)							10 Related Dissertations (27% of the 37)	
Developed a Theory/Model 16 (43.3%)			Refined a Theory/Model 8 (21.6%)		Tested a Theory/Model 1 (2.7%)	Utilized Dubin's Methodology 2 (5.4%)	Developed a Theory/Model 10 (27%)	
"Adoption of Mediated Knowledge in Organizations: Source Credibility and Information Usefulness" by Watts, 1998 "Organizational Learning and Process Innovations: Formalizing the Dynamics Through a Social Network Approach" by Tinsakar, 1997 "Preserving and Transferring Knowledge-Based Resources During Post-Acquisition Implementation" by Ranft, 1997 "Developing Trust in Teams Within Health Care Organizations Surviving Dynamic Environments" by Felix, 1997 "The Social Context of Interpersonal Citizenship Behavior: A Mid-Range Theory and Test of a Model" by Settoon, 1996	"Co-Learning Communities: A Hermeneutic Account of Adult Learning in Higher Education Through the Lived World of Cohorts" by Lawrence, 1996 "Cultural Focus in Emerging Learning Organizations" by Owens, 1996 "Charismatic Chief Executive Officers: Are They More Effective? An Empirical Test of Charismatic Leadership Theory" by Agle, 1993 "Outdoor Experiential Management Training: A Substantive Grounded Theory About Process and Outcomes in One Training Program" by Black, 1993 "Leveraging Organizational Resources" by Nada, 1993	"Toward a General Model of Human Behavioral Systems" by White, 1992 "Critical Concepts Impacting Opportunities for Promotion: A Qualitative Study" by Hausmann, 1991 "A Framework for Determination of Strategies for General Manger Trans-formational Development" by Thorsell, 1990 "A Theoretical Model of Professional/ Staff Development from a Libertarian Perspective" by Earls, 1983 "Personal Control in Organizations" by Bateman, 1980	"An Extension of the Job Characteristics Model for a Service Economy" by Tongas, 1997 "A Middle Range Approach to Theory Development for Service Organizations" by Bocker, 1992 "Organizational Locus of Control and Professional and Career Commitment as Predictors of Resistance to Work-Related and Organizational Change" by Rhinehart, 1992 "New CEOs and the Helm in Large Firms: The Relationship of the Succession Context to Subsequent Organizational Change and Performance" by Baumrin, 1990	"Career Development Model: Organizational Support, Development, Supervision, and Individual Career Motivation" by Strickstein, 1989 "Termination Behaviors During Social Change: Empirical Tests of Selected Theoretical Propositions" by Alexander, 1984 "Employee Withdrawal from Work: A Theoretical Integration and comparative Examination of Several Causal Models" by Wendelken, 1983 "A Situation Approach to Organizational Effectiveness in a Public Agency" by Hartenstein, 1981	"Team Building Effectiveness in a Police Union: A Test of a Theoretical Model" by Wienclaw, 1979	"Toward a Theoretical Analysis of Action Science" by Shindell, 1994 "Using Dubin's Theory Building Methodology to Construct a Model of the Impact of Management Training" by Berardinelli, 1991	"Child-Centered Emergent Curriculum" by Seuh, 1995 "Theory Building and Cycles of Violence: The Limits of State Coercion in Extranational Rebellions" by Tuttle, 1995 "Supplier Responses to Retailer Bankruptcy" by Johnson, 1995 "Through the Looking Glass: Principles of Image Management for College and University Administrators" by Myers, 1990 "Mediation Process: A Consensus Model Designed by Student Participants" by Pastorino, 1990 "Program Structures in Self-Direction in Independent Learners by Higgs, 1989	"Mediators' Assessments, Strategies and Tactics in Public Sector Disputes" by Young, 1989 "Toward a Theoretical Model of the Integration of Organizational Development Within the Administration of Higher Education" by Rogers, 1984 "The Development of a Model and Curriculum Design in Information Utilization for Education Students" by Rochester, 1981 "An Exploratory Study to Construct and Investigate A Theoretical Model Unifying Humanistic, Educational Alternatives, and the Educational Belief System Process" by Moses, 1980

Theoretical Model Building

There are various levels of theory - micro, macro, middle-range (Merton, 1968) and types of models - literary, academic, eristic, symbolic, postulational, formal, interpretive (Kaplan, 1964). After observing that theory, theoretical model, model, and system are essentially interchangeable, Dubin (1969, 1978) suggests that whatever level or kind of theory/model offered is acceptable for use in what he calls the "theory-research cycle." This theory-research cycle is a process of inquiry and knowledge development in which theories/models are created to explain or predict and then are tested and redefined or refined. This is a process of suggesting, testing, refining, suggesting, testing, and refining, etc. This is a process of clarification and definition.

According to Dubin (1978) there are several critical considerations about the theory/model and its linkage to the theory-research process. First, the theory/model is unlimited in its scope – only the limits of human imagination and reasoning set boundaries. Second, the theory/model is more than just statements of hypotheses or the presentation of variables – it has units, laws of interaction, boundaries, system states, propositions, empirical indicators, and hypotheses to be tested. Third, the adequacy of a theory/model is always and only determined by the logic of the reasoning used to create the theory/model. Fourth, the reality of a theory/model (how well it matches the "real world") is always and only determined by submitting the theory/model to testing and experimentation. Fifth, a theory/model is "scientific" if, and only if, the theory/model is submitted to empirical testing.

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Conclusion

Several ways in which theoretical model building can facilitate conceptual clarification and definition in HRD are by:

1) modeling the theoretical components of expert definitions in theory-research cycles towards a unifying definition of HRD,
2) modeling HRD specific research in theory-research cycles towards identifying gaps in HRD research,
3) modeling components of HRD towards delineating boundaries of the field,
4) indicating direction for future research efforts based upon propositions and hypotheses developed, and
5) enabling further dialogue and reflection in the field.

As Watkins (1990) says, "We need research and model building to figure out who we are." We need specific HRD focused research, and incremental theoretical model building to achieve more and more clarification and definition of the field.

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Bridging the Gap With a Multidimensional Performance Model

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This paper offers a complex, dynamic model in which three aspects of performance—capacity, process, and accomplishment—are defined at four levels of the organization—individual, group, organization, and industry. The model incorporates the resource-based view of the firm from the strategy literature with the systems perspective from the performance improvement literature. A selected sample of research from micro and macro fields of organizational studies is reviewed and categorized to illustrate the model.

Keywords: Performance, Systems, Multilevel Measurement:

Ever since Rummler and Brache (1992) introduced a performance improvement model that explicitly addressed levels issues, human resource development (HRD) professionals have been aware of the need to consider the interrelationships among individual, process, and organizational levels. Unfortunately this awareness has not manifested itself in either practical solutions or grounded theory. Swanson (1998) claims that the reason for this gap in knowledge and research is that HRD and performance improvement researchers have historically favored the psychological foundations of the field over its economic and systems foundations. "As a result, what is called organization development is reduced to individual development or team development in hopes of achieving improvement in organizational performance" (p. 12).

Sleezer, Zhang, Gradous, & Maile (in press) have proposed a *Systems Model of Performance* to aid in understanding levels issues and to focus on the interplay among three essential aspects of performance. Their model integrates the scientific management, instructional design, and systems views of performance into a three-by-three matrix with cells allotted to performance *capacities*, *processes*, and *accomplishments* at three hierarchical levels of the organization—*individual*, *team*, and *organization*.

The purpose of this paper is to build upon this work in three ways: (1) expand the model by adding industry to its hierarchical levels and incorporating the *resource-based view* of the firm; (2) clarify the model's definitional foundation; and (3) collect studies from across organizational research streams that illuminate issues related to each cell of the performance matrix. In the process of expanding and further defining the *Systems Model of Performance*, a new configuration emerged that we call the *Multidimensional Performance Model*. This model led to several discoveries related to a dynamic view of organizations and performance improvement.

Expanding the Original Model and Clarifying Definitions

Holton (1998) suggests that HRD professionals too often use the "individual lens" in addressing performance issues, while strategic management researchers tend to confine themselves to the organization and industry lens. By adding the industry level, we address this gap and transform the performance matrix into a multidisciplinary model. The resulting model frames the organization as a complex, dynamic entity comprised of interacting subsystems that also interrelate with other complex systems outside organizational boundaries (Boulding, 1956). Bringing the industry level into the matrix allows for consideration of the organization's performance among its competitors and its relationships to market and economic forces. It also permits consideration of the *resource-based view* of the firm.

The resource-based view (Barney, 1991) is the first theory of the firm growing out of the field of industrial/organizational economics to incorporate human factors in a significant way. Proponents of this view acknowledge that the idiosyncrasies common to complex organizational systems may be the source of sustainable competitive advantage (Reed & DeFillippi, 1990). These idiosyncratic resources—many of which are embedded in the social subsystems of the organization—include human and organizational capital such as unique product or market knowledge and cultures that support risk-taking, innovation, and responsiveness. Because they are acquired over time, these resources are path-dependent. They also may be causally ambiguous because they result from processes that are not easily visible to or understood by competitors. Another way to think of such resources is as outcomes of organizational learning (Glynn, Lant, & Milliken, 1994; Senge, 1990). The learning process is the glue

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that ties process and outputs together over time and increases their value to the organization. The accumulation of such idiosyncratic learning—what Sleezer, et al. identify as *capacity*—can be the source of future growth and performance leading to competitive advantage.

Sleezer and her co-authors use a baseball analogy to illuminate the meaning of *capacity*, *process*, and *accomplishment* at three hierarchical levels. Using their matrix as a starting point, we added the industry level, further clarified and expanded definitions, and reordered the cells. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Multidimensional Performance Matrix Definitions

	Capacity	**Process**	**Accomplishment**
Individual	The accumulated bundle of individual capabilities and resources available for present and future work requirements (such as decision-making, adaptation, innovation, and learning).	Patterns of actions and interactions carried out by individuals using resources (information, machines, and people) to produce output designated by their jobs or to create innovative outputs.	The outputs of an individual's work activities that add value to the organization.
Group	The accumulated, idiosyncratic bundles of group capabilities and resources available for present and future organizational activities (such as high-speed decision-making, adaptation, innovation, and identification of strategic issues).	Patterns of interaction carried out by two or more individuals with resources (information, machines, and people) to produce collective output designated by their organizational unit or to create innovative outputs.	The outputs of formal and informal group work activities that add value to the organization.
Organization	The accumulated, idiosyncratic bundles of skills, knowledge, and tangible and intangible assets embedded in the formal and informal organizational structure and culture available for strategic decision-making, adaptation, and innovation leading to competitive advantage.	Patterns of interaction carried out by the organization and its subsystems with resources (information, machines, organizational members and groups) to produce output designated by organizational goals and mission or to create innovations.	The outputs of an organization's activities that increase its value and perpetuate its existence by satisfying its stakeholders
Industry	The accumulated bundles of skills, knowledge, and interorganizational linkages shared by organizations competing in the same market available to support and sustain industry evolution.	Patterns of interaction carried out by the organizations competing in the same market to produce mutually beneficial output or develop innovations.	Outputs derived from the competitive interrelationships of organizations operating in the same product markets.

The *capacity* aspect of performance includes the classic tangible resources—land, labor, and capital as well as all organizational processes, capabilities, firm attributes, information, and knowledge that enable the firm to develop and implement value-creating strategies (Barney, 1991). Idiosyncratic resources include the experience, intelligence, relationships, insight, and judgment that reside in the firm's formal reporting structure and coordination systems and its informal networks. The components of *capacity* are derived in three ways: (1) they are brought in from outside as the firm acquires physical, financial, and human capital; (2) they are developed within the firm by direct processes such as designing organizational systems; and (3) they are generated through learning as the indirect by-products of organizational activity.

In defining *process*, we assume interaction to be a necessary condition. The patterns of interaction that are considered process also must result in either (a) outputs designated by the job, the organizational unit, or the organizational mission or (b) unintended outputs or innovations that emerge from the process. The definitions in the *accomplishment* column focus on outputs that are valued by stakeholders. The term "valued outcomes" may include

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products, services, and new knowledge acquired as a result of organizational processes that can add value to future outputs (Nonaka, 1991 Lado & Wilson, 1994).

The three aspects of performance have distinctively different characters. *Capacity* is a reservoir of diverse tangible and intangible assets and capabilities that are brought to the firm from the outside or generated as by-products of the firm's activities over time. By contrast, *process* requires interactions over time, and *accomplishment* describes an end state—the outcome of a process.

Research Review and Discovery

We reviewed multi-disciplinary research with the intent of producing a representative sample of literature that could help scholars and practitioners in using the Multidimensional Performance Matrix. Although not exhaustive, our review included studies from human resource development, organizational behavior, industrial/organizational psychology, industrial sociology, organization theory, and strategy. We specifically sought research examples to exemplify each of the twelve cells in the matrix and limited our search to major journals and research published since the mid 1980s.

We were immediately struck by the variety of ways in which performance was defined in organizational research. Many studies with a macro focus used traditional quantitative global measures such as return on investment (e.g., Miles, Snow, & Sharfman, 1993) and profitability (e.g., Eisenhardt, 1989). Studies with a micro focus used such quantitative measures as task performance (e.g., Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Morrison, 1993). There were also studies from both micro and macro fields that used goal achievement (e.g., Pritchard, et al., 1988; McGrath, MacMillan, & Ventakaraman, 1995; Browning, Beyer, & Shetler, 1995; Hill & Hellriegel, 1994). In addition, several studies measured performance as change in terms of adoption of innovation or new technology (e.g., Robertson, Swan & Newell, 1996; Elg & Johansson, 1997) and decision adoption (e.g., Nutt, 1993). The studies that relied on qualitative methodology used more divergent measures ranging from supervisors' evaluations of performance (e.g., Atwater & Yammarino, 1992), to self-reported perceptions of performance (e.g., Cohen & Ledford, 1994; Youndt, Snell, & Dean, 1996), changed cognitive schema (e.g., Poole, Gioia, & Gray, 1989), decision merit (e.g., Dean & Sharfman, 1996), quality of group process (e.g., Prussia & Kinicki, 1996), and satisfaction (e.g., Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993).

Levels Issues

Not only were performance measures widely varied, but many studies crossed two or more hierarchical levels as well. Among these studies were several examples of misspecification and the cross-level and contextual fallacies common in multilevel research (Rousseau, 1985; Klein, Dansereau, & Hall, 1994). In some studies data was aggregated from one level to draw conclusions about performance at a higher level without acknowledging the threats to validity inherent in such manipulation Other studies made leaps of faith that conclusions observed at one level automatically existed at or affected performance at another. Several authors also were caught in the anthropomorphism trap by speculating about the collective organization as if it were an individual. In her seminal article on the pitfalls of multilevel research, Rousseau (1985) asserted that sound multilevel research explicitly delineates functional relationships and carefully links focal level with levels of measurement, analysis, and generalization. We found several studies that accomplished this by either explicitly restricting their theory, measurement, and analysis to a single organizational level (e.g., Smith, et al., 1991; Rowe & Cooke, 1995) or clearly acknowledging and confronting issues of multiple levels (e.g., Eisenhardt, 1989; Robertson, Swan, & Newell, 1996).

Levels issues are indigenous to organizational research. "By their very nature, organizations are multilevel" and "no construct is level free....To examine organizational phenomena is thus to encounter levels issues" (Klein, Dansereau, & Hall, 1994, p. 198). In creating a matrix that specified distinct boundaries between levels, we had understated the reality of multilevel phenomena in organizations. This realization led us to modify our research classification scheme by first determining whether the studies were single or multilevel in design.

Performance Aspects Are Fluid

Our review of the research also revealed that the Multidimensional Performance Matrix understated the fluidity of performance across the aspects of *capacity, process,* and *accomplishment.* In the majority of studies we reviewed, the *capacity* category actually resulted from or fed process. Classifying studies relative to *accomplishment* was also problematical. In the field, valued *accomplishments* were transformed into *capacity* and

served as fuel for further development of *process*. For example: successful products inspired further investment; effective alignment of organizational components with environmental forces contributed to greater organizational performance; and improved group processes fueled more effective decisions. Because of the fluidity of performance across aspects, finding studies that fit one and only one cell proved difficult. In short, the expanded and more clearly defined Multidimensional Performance Matrix proved insufficient

The classification difficulties we encountered resulted primarily from the divergent character of the three aspects of performance and their relationship to time. While *process* exists in time and *capacity* evolves through time, *accomplishment* is an end state and the means by which performance is ultimately measured. Although all three of the performance aspects can be considered performance variables; *accomplishment*, by definition, is necessary to the measurement of performance improvement. "Performance improvement can only be manifest through outputs" (Swanson, 1998, p.8). All the studies we categorized incorporated some measure of performance by specifying outcomes or accomplishments. Therefore, accomplishment was not useful in differentiating among studies. For this reason, we did not include a category for *accomplishment* in the classification scheme.

We also assumed that *accomplishment* was necessarily preceded by activity or *process*. "Performance cannot be described or improved without specifying its determinants, accounting for the sophisticated processes through which performance is expressed... and making some judgment about whether or not performance has, in fact, improved. (Swanson, 1998, p.1-8). This is the *process* to *accomplishment* flow that is central to a generic systems model of the organization. Because we assume that this link exists in every study of performance, we did not use it as a category for classification. The reverse *accomplishment* to *process* link, however, could be of interest in studies that examine the feedback of results related to *accomplishment* and used to fine-tune process. Most of the studies we classified were primarily differentiated by their focus on *capacity* or *process* or some combination of the two.

As a result of the discoveries made in our literature search, we categorized the representative studies as single or multi level in focus and as oriented toward *process* or *capacity* or one of the relationships between *capacity*, *process*, and *accomplishment*. The results are shown in table 2.

This multilevel, multiaspect classification scheme is a more accurate representation of the performance research stream than the original framework proposed by Sleezer, et al. (in press). The expanded matrix includes multilevel studies (shaded rows) and multiaspect studies (shaded columns). The studies shown in dark shading with white lettering capture both multiple dimensions. Of the 35 studies shown, 18 are single level and single aspect, 4 are multilevel and single aspect, 8 are single level and multiaspect, and 5 are both.

Given the fit of studies in the matrix, three observations can be made. First, single-level research is common not only in the micro fields but also in the fields of organization theory and strategy. Second, *capacity* is a performance aspect that is supported by research. Third, the reciprocal link between *process* and performance is well-represented by research.

A New Model Emerges

Our review of the research indicated a need to revise the performance matrix. Once we realized that performance research could not be neatly classified by a singular aspect or level, we also discovered that the links between the aspects required a closer look. Clearly *process* shares direct and reciprocal relationships with both *capacity* and *accomplishment*. Organizations that learn by doing use processes that build capabilities as well as produce output. However, the nature of the relationship between *capacity* and *accomplishment* is not direct. *Capacity*, as defined in our model, is a reservoir of potential capabilities that must be put into action to produce output. Capabilities are unleashed through *processes* which serve as a mediator between *capacity* and *accomplishment*. If we accept that learning is an activity-based process, then we accept also that *process* is a mediator from *accomplishment* back to *capacity*. Without process intervening, there is no direct relationship between *capacity* and *accomplishment*. In this way, process becomes the dynamic center of our revised model shown in Figure 1.

Table 2. Representative Studies of Multidimensional Performance

	{Capacity}	Capacity ⇔ Process	{Process}	Accomp. ⇒Process
Individ.	Atwater & Yammarino, 1992 Quinones, Ford, & Teachout, 1995 Rowe & Cooke, 1995 Sujan, Sujan, & Bettman, 1988	Lurigio & Carroll, 1985 Yukl, Kim, & Falbe, 1996	Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996 Morrison, 1993 Schnake, 1991	
Individ. & Group		Weick & Roberts, 1993	Prussia & Kinicki, 1996 Latham, Winters, & Locke, 1994 Walsh, Henderson, & Deighton, 1988	
Group	Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993	McGrath, MacMillan, & Venkataraman, 1995 Nutt, 1990)	Cohen & Ledford, 1994 Banker, et al., 1996	Pritchard, et al, 1988
Group & Org.		Eisenhardt, 1989 Hatcher & Ross, 1991	Brooks, 1994	
Org.	Youndt, et al. 1996 Doty, Glick, & Huber, 1993 Jennings & Seaman, 1994	Dean & Sharfman, 1996	Thomas, Clark, & Gioia, 1993 Damanpour & Evan, 1984	
Org. & Industry		Hill & Hellriegel, 1994 Robertson, Swan, & Newell, 1996		
Industry	Miles, Snow, & Sharfman, 1993 Cool & Dierickx, 1993	Browning, Beyer, & Shetler, 1995 Smith, et al., 1991	Elg & Johansson, 1997	

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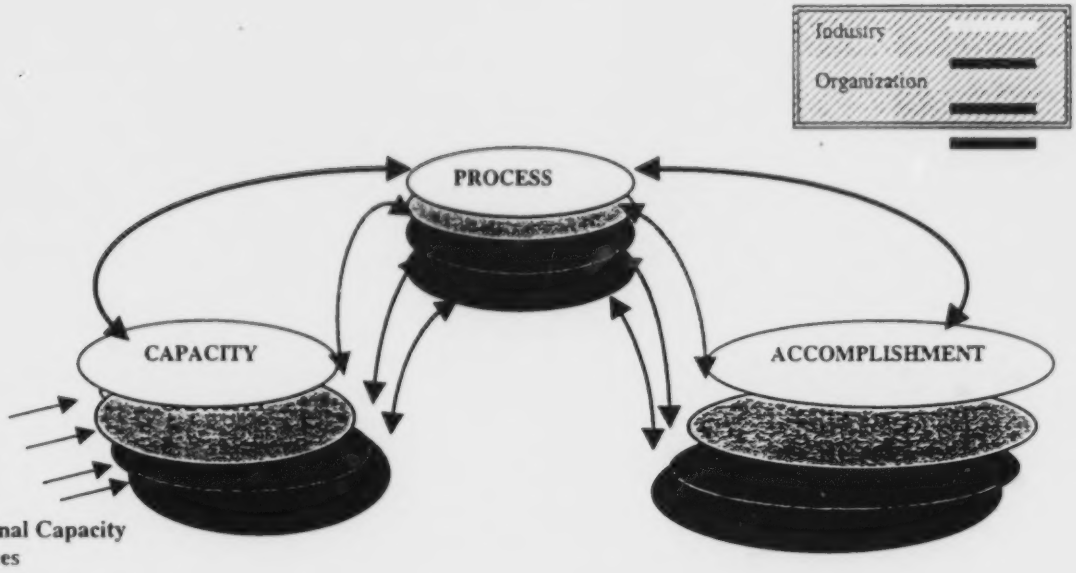
Figure 1. A Multidimensional Model of Performance



This graphic is overly simplistic in several ways. First, in addition to the arrows showing interrelationships within levels, there should be additional arrows between each aspect at one level and the adjacent aspect at every other level. We have omitted these to keep the figure readable. Second, the layered ellipses showing the levels should be understood to represent aggregates of units of progressively larger numbers. If the top ellipse represents a single industry, then the second ellipse represents the aggregate of several organizations in that industry, the next ellipse represents the collective groups within each organization, and the ellipse at the bottom represents the collection of individuals comprising those groups. To represent the true complexity of this concept, each level should be represented by increasingly more ellipses connected with interrelationship arrows within and across levels. The top most layer in the graphic must be understood to contain the most complexity in terms of numbers of sub-units and interconnectivity. The single arrows pointing into the capacity aspect at each level represent the composite of capacity components that come into organizations from the outside. This composite includes such elements as financial and human capital, investment by stockholders, technology, and regulatory concessions.

Implications for Scholars and Practitioners

Historically, the performance improvement field has been more grounded in practice than research (Sleezer 1991) and has suffered from a myopic focus on individual and group levels to the detriment of a more macro level view. The result of this situation has been a proliferation of practical models of performance in the absence of well-grounded theory (Swanson, 1998). On the macro side of organizational studies, there is a vast body of research on organizational performance motivated by the fundamental question, how does a firm establish sustainable competitive advantage? Strategists and organizational theorists have based their assumptions primarily on the traditions of industrial economics with its theoretical focus and seeming disinterest in practice (Conner, 1991). If performance improvement professionals can be said to suffer from myopia, then strategists are equally disabled by an inability to see things close at hand

Our primary purpose in this paper is to take a step toward bridging this gap by creating a performance model that integrates the micro and macro perspectives. The opportunity for such an effort is particularly ripe at this time due to the concurrent calls for a more comprehensive theory of performance in HRD (Torraco, 1998; Swanson, 1998; Holton, 1998) and the acknowledgement by strategists supporting a resource-based view of the firm that idiosyncratic human capital is critical to organizational success (Barney, 1991; Reed & Defillippi, 1990). We seized this opportunity by adapting a performance model from HRD (Sleezer, et al., in press) that proposed *capacity* as a

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critical performance component and expanded it to include the industry level. We then defined the *capacity* aspect of performance in a way that incorporated both the HRD and strategic views of human capital.

Our second purpose was to extract examples from the literature that could bring the model to life. This research review led us to several significant discoveries related to model dynamics. The Multidimensional Performance Model that emerged can serve as a springboard for exploring both macro and micro perspectives from different fields. Performance improvement professionals who previously were familiar only with research from the HRD perspective may become interested in work from the strategy literature such as that of Eisenhardt (1989) and Robertson, Swan and Newell (1996). These studies not only offer a macro perspective but also tackle the difficult problems presented by multilevel research while exploring the dynamic interrelationship between *process* and *capacity*.

The incorporation of *capacity* into the Multidimensional Performance Model also gives organizational learning a specific place in the performance equation. Numerous research questions arise from the construct of *capacity* and its relationship to learning and performance. For example, how is learning captured at the multiple levels in the organization? What processes come into play in the transfer of learning from one level to another? What processes are necessary for the application of learning to enhance accomplishment? Do groups learn in the same way as individuals or are there collective processes that are unique to group cognition? (e.g., Weick & Roberts, 1993).

Finally, by specifying levels, the Multidimensional Performance Model also brings levels issues to the forefront. Many questions related to these issues remain unexplored by performance improvement researchers. For example, what isomorphisms exist between processes and constructs that are well understood at the individual level and similar processes at progressively higher levels of collectivity? Several of the studies reviewed here explore well-established individual processes at the collective level such as goal-setting and collective efficacy (e.g., Latham, Winters & Locke, 1994; Prussia & Kinicki, 1996; Pritchard, et al., 1988). Many of the studies reviewed also offer new ways to measure performance across levels that performance professionals could use to justify lower level interventions (e.g., Dean & Sharfman, 1996; Walsh, Henderson & Deighton, 1988, Nutt, 1990). Still others suggest creative ways to fortify qualitative measures with quantitative ones that lend credibility to results for both practitioners and theorists (e.g., Eisenhardt, 1989; Damanpour & Evan, 1984).

Conclusion

The tendency of the performance improvement community to use a "single lens" in developing research and interventions leaves us in a difficult position. No matter how well we perfect our intervention techniques and measurement models, we find ourselves struggling to justify the impact of our efforts on the organization as a whole. One way to fill this gap is to carefully examine the links among individual, group, organization, and industry levels and the links across the *process*, *accomplishment*, and *capacity* aspects of performance. By analyzing these links and their direct, measurable effects on critical outcomes at the organizational level within the competitive environment, broader insights become available.

The Multidimensional Performance Model presented in this paper can be used as a framework for expanding our vision. It is a dynamic, comprehensive model that encompasses all levels of performance critical to organizational success. It also specifies *capacity* as an aspect of performance that ties the field of organizational learning to the resource-based view of the firm proposed by scholars in the field of strategy. When the near-sightedness that has characterized performance studies in HRD and the far-sightedness common to studies in organization theory and strategy come together, the result is a significant improvement in vision across the spectrum of performance improvement research and theory.

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